

Town of Wethersfield
Economic Development & Improvement Commission
Regular Meeting
Thursday May 10, 2007 – 12:00 Noon
Town Manager's Conference Room, Town Hall

MINUTES

1. Call To Order – Chair Betty Rosania called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.
2. Attendance and Quorum (6 members required)

Members in attendance: Chair Betty Rosania, Howard Greenblatt, Doug Sacks, Chris Lyons, Joan Hughes, Tony Homicki, Tom Dean and Chris Monroe.

Members absent: Frank Frago, Brian Silver, Adam Jeamel, Ken Rizzio, Joe Cornelio, Ralph Keleher and Bill Knapp.

Also in attendance: Andy Adil – Mayor, Bonnie Therrien – Town Manager, Paul Montinieri – Town Council, Phil Knecht – Planning and Zoning Commission Liaison, Peter Gillespie – Director of Planning and Economic Development and Denise Bradley - Assistant Planner.

3. Old Business

- a. Status Church Street/SDH Streetscape Project – Peter Gillespie reported that the copies of the plans were mailed out to affected property owners and tenants on Church Street and the Silas Deane Highway. He noted that he has fielded several inquiries as a result of the mailing and a meeting will be set up to discuss the proposal. Mr. Gillespie noted that comments from the Department of Transportation have indicated that elements within the right-of-way are undesirable but that he will wait to see the details of the additional comments expected from the Department of Transportation to respond.

- b. Website Update Status – Bonnie Therrien reported that the council had approved \$9,000 to fund the setup of the new website. She noted that the consultants hired have committed to finishing the conversion by June 30th.

- c. Preserve America – Status – Bonnie Therrien reported that a public meeting was held on May 3rd to discuss the status of the project. She noted that there were approximately 100 people in attendance. She reported that the beginning of the meeting turned into a protest about the Comstock Ferre proposal but noted that a number of young families who voiced support for the project also turned out.

- d. Redevelopment Agency – Special Meeting – Bonnie Therrien praised the Redevelopment Agency for doing amazing work in a short period of time. Peter Gillespie reported that the Agency recently met with the Town Council and would like to meet with the Chairperson's from the Economic Development and Improvement Commission (EDIC) and Planning and Zoning (PZC) to discuss progress.

e. Comstock Ferre Status - The Historic District Commission will hear the Comstock proposal at its May 22nd meeting which will be held at the Pitkin Community Center at 7:30 p.m.

f. Business Visitation Program – Peter Gillespie reported that the list of volunteers had been compiled and that Denise Bradley would distribute a copy to the EDIC to fill the remaining gaps.

4. New Business

a. 1260 Silas Deane Highway Project Status – Chair Rosania noted that the Hartford Hospital complex is proposing a 13,000 s. f. building expansion. Peter Gillespie described other site improvements that would be completed as part of the project. Chair Rosania noted that the proposal will be on the May 15th Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency (IWWA) Agenda and she then called for a motion to compose a letter of support to the IWWA. Ms. Rosania noted that the proposal is a critical piece to keeping this institution in town as they are rapidly outgrowing their current facility. Howard Greenblatt made a motion to compose a letter supporting the proposal to the IWWA. Joan Hughes seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

b. 7 Rail Road Place – Façade Improvement Application – Peter Gillespie reported that Carol Kober-Narciss has recently purchased this building and plans to renovate this former railroad freight depot into a café/boutique. Proposed improvements to the property include the following:

- Removal and replacement of existing handicap ramp
- Removal and replacement of front stairs
- New signage
- Driveway repairs
- New awnings
- New landscaping
- Replacement of front door
- Painting and repair work
- Installation of handicap bathroom
- Roof and chimney repairs
- New hatchway

Future improvements include the following:

- Installation of a gazebo
- Installation of fencing

The work is anticipated to cost \$51,522.00. The subcommittee did not recommend funding the handicap ramp. The cost minus the ramp is reduced to \$45,022 and the 50% match is \$22,511. Tony Homicki made a motion to fund \$22,511 for this application. Joan Hughes seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

c. 965 – 969 Silas Deane Highway- Rich Lagana – Modification To Approve Façade Improvement Application - In February the Commission voted to award an amount not to exceed \$17,000 for work

that included painting the exterior of the building, parking lot repairs, new rooftop mechanical units and work to the front landscaped islands. At the time, we miscalculated that \$17,000 would be the 50% match for this project. The estimated amount is actually \$42,700 and 50% would be \$21,350. The property owner has requested that we increase the amount to this recalculated figure. Tony Homicki made a motion to fund \$21,350 for this application. Joan Hughes seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

d. 898 Silas Deane Highway – Kirwin, LLC – Façade Improvement Application – Peter Gillespie reported that the applicant is in the midst of acquiring ownership of this property through a recent foreclosure auction and is proposing renovations to the building that will include removal of the existing facade and replacement with a new façade that will include a new pitched façade with metal roof, new support posts, new lights and new signage. The façade of the building will be painted and some planters will be installed. The façade repairs are estimated to cost \$100,000. The applicant has requested \$50,000. The present program has a policy that the match will not exceed \$40,000, the subcommittee recommends that we increase the program limits to \$50,000 and grant the applicant \$50,000. Tony Homicki made a motion to fund \$50,000 for this application with the condition that the Town Council is asked to consider raising the funding cap to \$50,000 for future applicants. Joan Hughes seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

e. 898 Silas Deane Highway – Kirwin LLC – Tax Incentive Application – Peter Gillespie reported that Pelton's Home Health Care will be moving its retail, repair, administration, accounting and billing offices to this location. There are 30 jobs involved in these operations of which 10 will be new to Wethersfield. The applicant is requesting consideration for personal and real estate property. It is estimated that the personal property will amount to \$143,000 and the real estate improvements will total \$309,700. The property is presently assessed at \$478,100. Mr. Gillespie noted that under the terms of the Town's Tax Incentive Program it appears that the Town could enter into a tax agreement for this property at a rate of 50% for up to 3 years. Tony Homicki made a motion to approve the forgiveness of a tax lien in the amount of \$27,000 and to recommend that the Town Council fund the Tax Incentive Application. Joan Hughes seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

f. Greater Hartford Guest Guide 2008 – Peter Gillespie reported that he has been approached about expanding the town's excerpt for the 2008 edition of the Greater Hartford Guest Guide. Mr. Gillespie described the different ad placement options and associated costs. He noted that the placement deadline is June 15th. Joan Hughes made a motion to support an expanded ad. Tony Homicki seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

4. Reports of the Town Manager -

Town Manager's Report – Bonnie Therrien reported on the following:

- The Town Council Budget Hearings.
- The receipt of a \$25,000 grant to provide horse & buggy rides in Old Wethersfield.

Town Council Liaison's Report – Paul Montinieri welcomed EDIC Chair Betty Rosania back to her post and commended Howard Greenblatt for his service as acting Chair. Mr. Montinieri also noted that Kronenberg and Associates of Middletown have been approved to conduct Phase II of the Town Hall Renovations.

Planning & Zoning Commission Liason's Report – Phil Knecht reported on the highlights of the April 17, 2007 meeting.

Tourism Commission Liason's Report – Joan Hughes reported on the highlights of the April 24, 2007 meeting.

Director of Planning and Economic Development's Report – Peter Gillespie reported on the highlights of the Monthly Economic Development Report and noted that an updated version of the Available Properties List has been compiled.

6. Chairman's Report – Betty Rosania thanked Howard Greenblatt for filing in for her as EDIC Chair. Ms. Rosania noted that the Silas W. Robbins Bed & Breakfast, located at 185 Broad Street, will be sponsoring house tours from October 5th through 14th. Howard Greenblatt reported that a tour program to support the Keane Foundation's 9/11 Memorial Sports Center is being put together. Doug Sacks made a motion to take out a ½ page advertisement in the program at a cost of \$500. Joan Hughes seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

7. Sub-Committee Reports -

Marketing and Communications - Mr. Sacks stated that the subcommittees work has already been reported earlier in the meeting.

Financial Strategies – Mr. Gillespie stated that the subcommittees work had already been reported earlier in the meeting.

8. Minutes- Approval of April 12, 2007 meeting minutes

9. Next Meeting – June 14, 2007

10. Correspondence – Joan Hughes noted that in celebration of Sue Lyons' success as a cancer survivor a benefit for the "The Jimmy Fund" will be held on Friday, June 8th from 7-11 p.m. at the Pitkin Community Center. Howard Greenblatt noted that the Keane Foundation 9/11 Memorial 5K Walk/Run will be held on June 3rd at Standish Park at 11:00 a.m.

11. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise Bradley, Assistant Planner